

Recycling Habits, Motivations, and Profiles

A South Carolina DHEC Study

January 2001

This *MarketSearch Topline* summarizes the key findings of a statewide telephone survey conducted on behalf of the **South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control**.

The study was conducted to investigate the "Who, What, and Why" of residential recycling in the state and identify opportunities to increase resident involvement.

Interviews for the study were conducted during December 2000 and January 2001. Respondents reflect a representative mix of age, gender, and geographic location in the state. Of the total sample size of 1003, 390 interviews were completed among residents of the Up-State, 317 among Midlands' residents, and 293 among residents of the Coastal/Pee Dee/Low Country region.

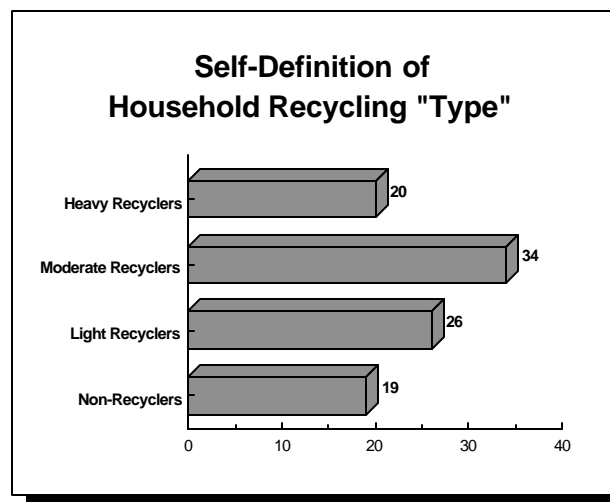
Unless otherwise indicated, data within this report are presented in percent. Sampling error for the total sample is $\pm 3.1\%$ at the 95 percent confidence level.

Key Study Findings

Who Recycles?

- Most residents of South Carolina recycle. Overall, more than four out of five (81%) say they recycle household items at least occasionally.

Most, however, describe themselves as *Moderate* (34%) or *Light* (26%) recyclers. Only one out of five (20%) describes themselves (or their household) as *Heavy* recyclers.



- *Heavy, Moderate, Light, and Non-Recyclers* tend to have different demographic profiles. (Refer to "*Recycler Type Profiles*" on the inside of this report.)

Two of the key factors which distinguish recycler "types" include: education and age.

There tends to be a strong correlation between involvement in recycling and advanced education. Fully 40% of *Heavy Recyclers* have a 4-year college degree (or advanced degree). By contrast, only about half that many *Light* or *Non-Recyclers* have a 4-year degree.

In addition, findings indicate that involvement tends to increase with age. Only 18% of *Heavy Recyclers* are under the age of 35, compared to about 40% for *Light* and *Non-Recyclers*.

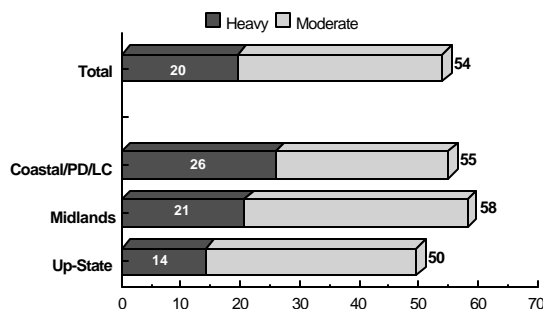
- The incidence of *Heavy Recyclers* is significantly higher in the Coastal/Pee Dee/Low

Demographic Profile of Recycling "Types"

	<u>Heavy Recycler</u>	<u>Moderate Recycler</u>	<u>Light Recycler</u>	<u>Non- Recycler</u>
Age	Over 45	35 to 54	Under 34	Under 34
	61%	43%	40%	39%
Education	College +	College +	HS/Some Coll.	HS or Less
	40%	37%	63%	51%
Household Income (mean)	\$53,250	\$49,500	\$44,250	\$43,750
Type of Home	80% SFD	75% SFD	61% SFD/ 22% Mobile	57% SFD/ 18% Apt./Condo
Years at Current Address (mean)	12.2	11.2	9.8	9.2
Household Size (mean)	2.4	2.7	2.6	2.7
Children in Household	33%	41%	40%	41%

Country (26%) and Midlands (21%) regions than in the Up-State (14%).

Self-Definition of Household Recycling "Type"



- Adults are responsible for the majority of recycling.

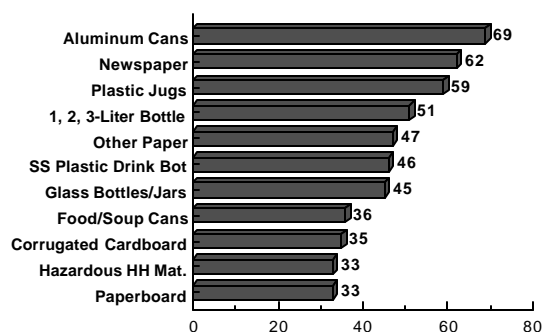
Women are primarily responsible at 44% of households; men at 37%. Responsibilities are shared or varied among the balance.

What is Recycled?

- The most common items recycled by South Carolina residents include: aluminum cans, newspaper, plastic jugs, 1/2/3 liter bottles, other paper, single-serving plastic drink bottles, and glass bottles/jars.
- Items topping the list of *"never recycled"* include: paperboard, hazardous household materials, food/soup cans, and corrugated cardboard.

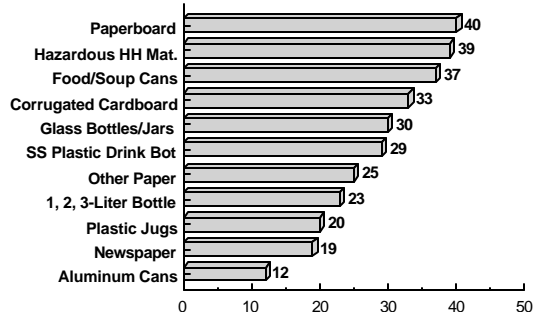
% of Households Which Recycles Each Item "Regularly"

(among those who recycle, N = 799)



% of Households Which "Never" Recycles Each Item

(among those who recycle, N = 799)



- As would be expected, those who categorize themselves as *Heavy Recyclers* are significantly more likely than others to recycle all items on a regular basis. On average, about nine out of ten *Heavy Recyclers* say they recycle aluminum cans, plastic jugs, and newspapers regularly.

- Items that residents would like to recycle that they currently aren't able to (or at least believe they aren't able to in their specific area) include: plastic jugs/plastics, cardboard/paperboard, colored glass, magazines and other paper goods, tin cans, tires, pesticides/chemicals, plastic bags, and batteries.

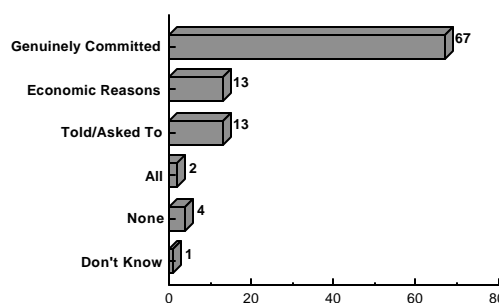
Why Do Recyclers Recycle?

- Among those who recycle, two out of three (67%) say it is because they are genuinely committed to the environment and the concept of recycling.

By contrast, only 13% say they do it for economic reasons and 13% because they are told or asked to.

General Motivation for Recycling

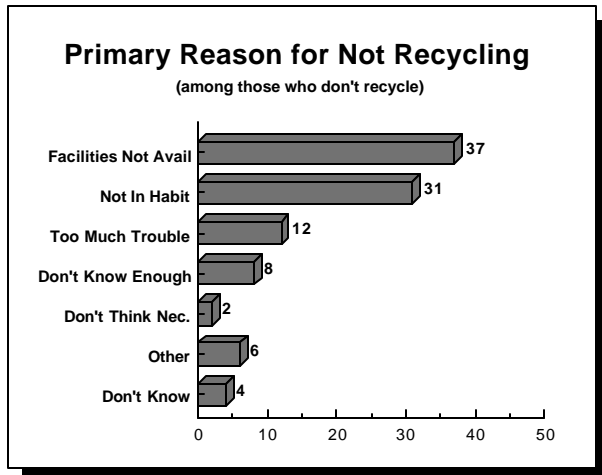
(among those who recycle)



- There is a strong correlation between involvement with recycling and commitment to the environment. Fully 84% of *Heavy Recyclers* say they recycle because of their genuine commitment to the concept, compared to only 49% of *Light Recyclers* and 72% of *Moderate Recyclers*.

While *Light Recyclers* are primarily driven by a commitment to the environment (49%), they are significantly more likely than others to also be motivated by economics (19%) and because they are told/asked to (20%).

- Among those who don't recycle, primary reasons relate to convenience and habit -- 37% say they don't recycle because facilities are not available or convenient, 31% say it's because they aren't in the habit, and 12% say it's too much trouble.



How Do We Increase Resident Involvement in Recycling?

- Convenience clearly plays a major role in recycling involvement. As shown above, about half of those who don't currently recycle indicate it's because it's not convenient.

Additional factors which illustrate the relative importance of convenience:

- fully 80% of all residents (recyclers and non-recyclers) agree with the statement, *"I'd be more likely to recycle if it were more convenient;"*
- 71% of those currently without curbside service say they'd be *more likely* to recycle if curbside service were available to them; and
- 47% of those who currently have to sort their recycling say they'd be *more likely* to recycle if they didn't have to sort (for the most part, the balance says it wouldn't impact their recycling behavior).

- Support tends to be reasonably strong for additional recycling programs:

- 88% agree that state and/or local governments should be doing more to encourage recycling;
- 73% say they wish they could recycle more types of products;
- 64% support paying a \$2 fee per tire for proper disposal;
- 52% support a program which would require refundable cash deposits on beverage containers;
- 46% support the *"Pay as You Throw"* type of program (and 53% say it would influence them to recycle more).

- In addition, findings identify opportunities to strengthen communications about recycling and/or awareness of programs:

- less than a third (30%) identify recall of advertising relative to recycling within the past year; and
- only 11% are aware of the State Recycling Office which offers technical assistance and has a recycling hot line available.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that most South Carolinians believe recycling is important and support efforts to encourage more recycling.

However, actual recycling is heavily dependent on how convenient it is to individual consumers. The findings make it clear that recycling is strongly related to having easy access to recycling options (e.g., curbside recycling.)

